

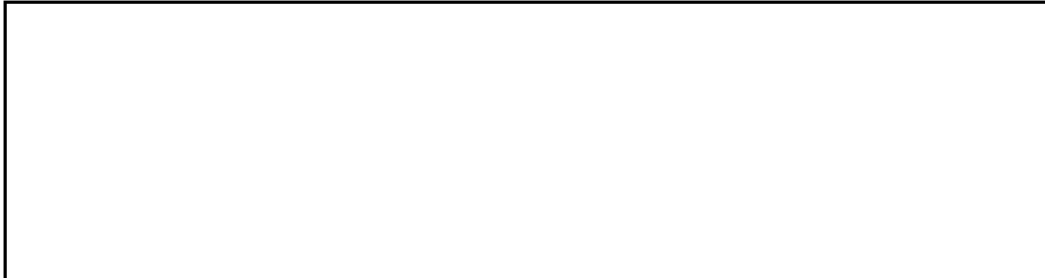
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Portuguese Communist Party Assesses the
National Situation

The Portuguese Communist Party has issued a formal assessment of Portugal's current problems, together with recommendations on how they should be solved. The tone and substance of the statement suggest that, while the party is not yet ready to abandon its image as a "responsible" group, it intends to play a more aggressive role in Portuguese politics.

The Communists argue that a more complete purge of the state bureaucracy is indispensable and call for a new civil service "devoted to the democratic cause." The assessment expressed some impatience that an economic plan has not yet been promulgated and adds that "we have the right" to expect vigorous steps to prevent big capital and big landowners from undermining the economy.

The economic plan has been temporarily shelved because of the inability of moderates and radicals to agree on its terms. The most recent reports we have received on this dispute indicated that the moderates had gained a slight edge.

A large portion of the Communist statement is devoted to the coming national election. The party denies it is against holding an election but dwells on charges that irregular practices will "falsify the genuiness of the election." The statement demands that these irregular situations "be corrected," citing, for example, the need for a "complete purge of local authorities" to insure a free election.

This part of the statement is probably intended to be a threat to delay the election if Communist demands are not met. It could also be an effort to lay a foundation for excuses if, as expected, the party does poorly at the ballot box.

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The statement complains about the exclusion of the Armed Forces Movement from the constituent assembly. The Communists argue that a new constitution should take into account the views of the Movement. The party announces its readiness to look into this problem with "other interested forces."

The Socialists are blamed for the current dispute with the Communists and are charged with forming "unholy alliances" that fall just short of putting the Socialists in the fascist corner. The Communists offer to patch up the quarrel, but the statement's long list of accusations against the Socialists would seem to preclude an agreement.

The Catholic Church was treated more gingerly--perhaps in recognition of its latent strength in Portugal. The statement merely notes that the understanding between Communists and Catholics is one of the "positive realities" of the democratic movement.

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Spain Reacts to Portuguese Events

Spanish opposition leaders and the press are concerned over the implications for Spain of the recent disruption of the Portuguese center right Social Democratic Center party congress in Oporto and the passage of the Portuguese unitary labor law. The Spanish press has headlined Portuguese Foreign Minister Soares' statement that his country is on the verge of civil war and featured the breakup of the congress in terms of its threat to the democratic experiment.

A leading Spanish Christian Democrat who attended the Oporto meeting told the US embassy in Madrid that the meeting set a bad precedent for democracy's chances in Spain. The source said the main issue in Spain, as well as in Portugal, was whether or not a broad spectrum of democratic options would be feasible. He speculated that many people on the Spanish right will now exploit Portuguese events to warn Spaniards of the dangers in widening political participation to the left.

Although many political observers do not believe the situation in the two countries is comparable, the Spanish opposition has considered the revolution in Portugal to be a means for dramatizing the need for democratic changes in Spain. These latest developments, however, have reportedly dampened the enthusiasm of many Spanish oppositionists for the Portuguese experiment and may persuade them to go slow in pushing for Spanish reforms.

An encouraging development for Spanish labor is the near unanimous support being expressed for pluralistic trade unionism for post-Franco Spain and a rejection of attempts to draw a parallel with the Portuguese labor situation. Only the government-controlled Spanish Syndical Organization favors continuation of the imposed unitary labor organization, and some of its officials have privately admitted favoring pluralism.

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A most significant development is the reported acceptance of pluralistic trade unionism by the Communist-dominated Workers' Commissions, the strongest clandestine labor group. This acceptance, despite the Workers' Commissions goal of eventual labor unity for Spain, reflects recognition of the importance of the other clandestine labor unions and is in accord with the Spanish Communist Party's political line. The communists are seeking to promote themselves as a moderate and responsible party favoring a multi-party parliamentary democracy for Spain.

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